



## Plenty to Savor this Season after an Early Spring

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MADISON – An early spring followed by a late frost could have meant trouble for Wisconsin fruit and vegetable growers.

“This was a different type of year, and we continue to keep our ear on what UW-Extension folks and our growers are saying,” said Bob Battaglia, Director USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service Wisconsin Field Office located at the Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection. (DATCP) “Our most recent Wisconsin Crop Progress report shows that we have had almost twice as many warm weather days earlier in the season than usual.”

While crop damage from the late frosts is still being assessed, one thing the unusually early warm weather may bring is an early harvest season for some crops. For example, the most active harvesting dates for sweet corn are usually in the middle of August, but it may start the first of August this year.

Many growers took extreme precautions to protect their fruit crops this spring, using sprinklers and other systems to keep the buds from freezing. The good news is that consumers should still be able to expect their favorite fresh fruits, including strawberries, but the question is when.

“The bounty of the crops will vary greatly from locality to locality with some crops coming much earlier than expected,” added Audra Hubbell, a Research Analyst. “Call your favorite pick-your-own spot ahead to make sure you don’t miss a family outing to pick strawberries or participate in another on-the-farm family tradition.”

One great resource for finding Wisconsin products, growers, businesses, food-related events or farmers’ markets is DATCP’s [SavorWisconsin.com](http://SavorWisconsin.com) website. Currently [SavorWisconsin.com](http://SavorWisconsin.com) has almost 200 farmers’ markets listed and that number will continue to grow. Growers work around the changes in the weather to guarantee a plentiful offering each week of high-quality products at the farmers’ market.

The official fruit production forecasts will come out in early July once more information is collected. Each crop and each farm may have been affected differently by unusual spring weather. Apple trees on the top of a hill in the breeze may have fared better than trees that suffered frost damage in the valleys.

It is too soon to tell the total impact on Wisconsin’s cherry crop, but despite the expected damage to tart cherries, growers are hopeful for the sweet cherry crop and welcomed visitors to see the beautiful blossoms. Last year, Wisconsin farmers harvested 6.7 million pounds of tart cherries.

Wisconsin’s fresh fruit and vegetable crops are very valuable to our state’s economy. The value of production for Wisconsin’s strawberry crop was \$6.44 million in 2011. Whether pre-picked or pick-your-own, dollars spent on Wisconsin products circulate to support local farms, businesses and our economy.

To support your Wisconsin growers, visit [SavorWisconsin.com](http://SavorWisconsin.com). You can easily search by your city name, zip code or what you are looking for. To see the weekly Wisconsin Crop Progress report, visit [http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics by State/Wisconsin/Publications/Crop Progress & Condition](http://www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/Wisconsin/Publications/Crop_Progress_&_Condition). Connect with DATCP on Twitter at [twitter.com/widatcp](https://twitter.com/widatcp) or Facebook at [facebook.com/widatcp](https://facebook.com/widatcp).

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